

HOW TO MAKE SAUERKRAUT

Basic Steps:

Shred cabbage, add salt and other seasonings (optional), pound cabbage to help salt release its water to create a brine, press salted cabbage into a vessel and down beneath the brine using a weight, cover loosely to allow CO₂ to release but to keep out debris. Leave undisturbed at about 65°, wait, and begin tasting after about two weeks. Ready in 2-6 weeks.

Basic Ratios:

3 T salt for each 5 pounds of cabbage

5 pounds of cabbage fits in a gallon jar, 15 pounds in a 3 gallon crock, 25 pounds in a 5-gallon crock/bucket

Ingredients – Yield about 6 quarts

15 pounds of trimmed and cored cabbage

9 T sea salt

3 T optional spices (caraway seed, juniper berries, fennel seed, etc)

Equipment:

Large mixing vessel: bowl or food-grade bucket or bin

Large 3-5 gallon crock OR about 6 quart-sized mason jars with lids

Cutting board

Shredding device: sharp knife, mandolin, food processor, or kraut board

Scale

Measuring spoons

Plate (if using a large crock)

Quart or pint mason jars with lids (to use as weights if using a large crock) OR large zippered baggies filled with salt water (to use as weights if using quart mason jars)

Light dish towel or cloth (one for each brewing vessel)

Process:

1. Start with the first 5 pounds of cabbage and set the remaining ingredients aside. Quarter and core the heads of cabbage and shred thinly with a sharp chef's knife, a kraut board, or a food processor. Place in a large bowl/bucket/bin.
2. Add 3 T of the salt to the cabbage and blend well with bare hands. Use your hands to massage and squeeze the salt into the cabbage.
3. Add a third (1 T) of the optional spices, if using. Mix in well with your hands.
4. Repeat steps 1-3 until all of the cabbage, salt and optional spices are used up.
5. Place salted and spiced (optional) cabbage into crock or jars as follows:

If using a large 3-5 gallon crock:

- Add about a third of the cabbage mix to the crock and press down firmly, packing it tightly to rest beneath the brine, with your fist or a potato masher or even a meat tenderizer (basically, anything with a long handle on one end and something flat on the other). Repeat by adding more of the cabbage mix and pressing, cabbage and pressing, etc, until all of the cabbage is in the crock and beneath the brine.
- Place a weight on top of the kraut to keep it submerged beneath the brine. There are numerous ways to do this:
 - A plate that fits inside the crock with a weight on top (clean jars filled with water and sealed to avoid spilling work well for this). Or,
 - A few well-rinsed cabbage leaves, discarded from the original trimming layered up to form a “plate”, topped with one or two large food-grade plastic baggies filled with salt water (in case it leaks) that conform to the shape of the crock. Jars filled with water and tightly lidded may also be used atop of the cabbage leaves.
 - Move the crock to a place where it will be undisturbed for a few weeks and where it can brew at about 65 degrees, if possible. Cover the crock with a thin, clean dish towel to allow the CO2 to escape, yet keep out debris.

If using several mason jars:

- Evenly divide the cabbage mix into the jars, filling them about a third of the way full and pressing before adding another layer. Leave about two inches of head space in each jar.
 - To weigh the cabbage beneath the brine in a mason jars, use a few well-rinsed cabbage leaves, discarded from the original trimming layered up to form a “plate”, topped with a food-grade plastic bags filled with salted water (in case it leaks) that can fit inside the remaining space. You can also use a few of the discarded cabbage leaves rolled into a ball or log, sized to fit snugly so that it presses down upon the kraut once the lid is loosely in place (see below).
 - Place the screw-on lids loosely on the jars so that the CO2 may escape, yet that debris is kept out. Alternatively, the lids may be screwed on tighter as long as they are “burped” every day or so to manually allow the CO2 to escape.
6. Check the crock or jars after 24 hours to be sure the cabbage is still submerged beneath the brine. If it isn't, blend 1 ½ T salt with a quart of water and top off the kraut. Use more if necessary.
 7. Continue checking the kraut periodically to check the brine level and to remove any scum that might have formed with a clean spatula or towel. Additionally, the weights and plate may be removed, cleaned of scum, and replaced.
 8. Start tasting the kraut after about 2 weeks. The kraut should be ready in about 2-4 weeks if stored at 70-75° or 5-6 weeks if stored at 60-65° degrees.
 9. Once the kraut has reached the desired taste, cover it with a lid and move it to a cool, dry and dark place (like a root cellar) or into a refrigerator for more long-term storage.